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Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives**

In conformity with General Assembly resolution 48/218, 54/244 and 59/272, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on strengthening the role of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives. The Secretary-General concurs with the approach to programme evaluation described in the report. The Secretary-General takes note of the recommendations of OIOS and draws attention to the independent external evaluation of auditing, oversight and governance, including a review of OIOS, which is currently under way pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/1 of 16 September 2005.

* A/61/50 and Corr.1.
** The report was delayed because of extensive consultations with departments and offices.

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives

Summary

The present report contains a review of both internal programme self-evaluation and central evaluation practice and capacity in the Secretariat during the biennium 2004-2005. The review is based on a survey of programme focal points, data from evaluation plans submitted by programmes as part of the programme budget preparation process for 2006-2007 and an assessment of central evaluation capacity. To assess the quality of evaluation products in the Secretariat, the review draws on the findings of a meta-evaluation of a sample of evaluation reports produced during the biennium. The overall Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conclusion of the present report is that: (a) at the programme level, the Secretariat presents a mixed picture in terms of evaluation practice; and (b) the Secretariat's central evaluation capacity is inadequate.

In terms of quality, the meta-evaluation of evaluation reports highlighted present strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement in the quality of evaluations. Most reports received high quality ratings for "contextual framework" and for the "strength of findings and recommendations". However, attention needs to be paid to strengthening the methodological approaches used in the design and conduct of evaluations and to ensuring that conclusions are based on the citation of evidence. Efforts are also required to enhance the "usability and impact" of the evaluation reports.

With regard to practice and capacity at the programme level, a total of 214 evaluations were reported to have been conducted in 2004-2005. Problems persist in terms of insufficient clarity and uniformity in defining and conducting self-evaluations. Some progress has been made in the formulation of evaluation plans and in the identification of resources earmarked for monitoring and evaluation activities in 2006-2007. Strong commitment by management at all levels is required for the full and effective implementation of these plans. There are 14 units throughout the Secretariat that support self-evaluation. However, the majority of them are responsible for other activities as well. In order to determine whether programme evaluation needs are being met with these current arrangements, clear criteria for how evaluation needs are to be determined and met are essential. Overall, only 26 Professional staff members are assigned full-time to evaluation activities.

At the central level, the evaluation function has been weakened over the years; with a current total staff capacity of three Professionals, it is unable to fully meet its mandate to produce objective evaluations of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities for use by the Secretariat and Member States. At best, it can produce an in-depth evaluation of each Secretariat programme only once every 27 years, together with an annual thematic evaluation. It does not have adequate capacity to provide quality assurance, capacity development, knowledge management support on evaluation activities to programme managers and overall guidance for the development and effective functioning of a Secretariat-wide evaluation system as mandated.

The present report presents two forthcoming actions by OIOS to improve self-evaluation practice and capacity in the Secretariat. They are for OIOS to: (a) conduct a Secretariat-wide needs assessment exercise to define and establish evaluation needs at the programme level, including specification of resources required for a credible evaluation function at programme levels; and (b) issue specific guidelines aimed at clarifying current regulations and rules regarding evaluation. In addition, the OIOS programme budget for 2008-2009 will reflect adequate requirements for rigorous and regular central evaluation of performance and outcomes of Secretariat programmes and activities.

The present report concludes with the presentation of topics for in-depth and thematic evaluation for the period 2007-2009, for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination and recommendation for approval by the General Assembly.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is the ninth in a series of reports that have been submitted biennially since 1988 to the General Assembly through the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (PPBME).[1]

2. The present report presents an overview of evaluation practice and capacity within the United Nations Secretariat. First, it reports on both internal programme self-evaluations and central evaluation of programme activities in the Secretariat during the biennium 2004-2005, and assesses the quality of a sample of evaluation reports. Second, it reviews the current evaluation capacity in the Secretariat at both programme and central levels, in reference to a number of norms and standards of evaluation that have been agreed to by evaluation practitioners in the United Nations system.[2] Third, it makes recommendations on priority areas that need to be addressed to strengthen the evaluation function. Finally, the report proposes topics for in-depth and thematic evaluations to be undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

II. Methodology

3. The present report was prepared using a combination of methods. First, information on evaluation activities undertaken during the biennium was obtained from a survey of 30 focal points in 27 Secretariat programmes,[3] conducted in November 2005. A total of 24 programmes responded, a response rate of 80 per cent. Second, data was also obtained from a review of pertinent United Nations documents and evaluation plans prepared by 23 programmes. Survey data used was not independently verified by OIOS.

4. Third, a meta-evaluation of a non-random sample of 23 evaluation reports from 10 of the 27 programmes surveyed (representing 11 per cent of the total of 214 evaluation reports produced during 2004-2005) was conducted by an external consultant.[4] The sample consisted of: nine mandatory external evaluations; five

[1] ST/SGB/2000/8 of 19 April 2000. The report responds specifically to regulation 7.4, which requires that "a brief report summarizing the conclusions of the Secretary-General on all evaluation studies be submitted to the General Assembly at the same time as the text of the medium-term plan" (now known as "the strategic framework").

[2] The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) is a professional group bringing together evaluation practitioners within the United Nations system. In 2005, after an extensive consultative process, UNEG agreed to the recommended norms and standards for evaluation for the United Nations system. The norms are: (1) definition, (2) responsibility for evaluation, (3) policy, (4) intentionality, (5) impartiality, (6) independence, (7) evaluability, (8) quality of evaluation, (9) competencies for evaluation, (10) transparency and consultation, (11) evaluation ethics, (12) follow-up to evaluation and (13) contribution to knowledge-building. The standards are: (1) institutional framework and management of the evaluation function, (2) competencies and ethics, (3) conducting evaluations and (4) evaluation reports. Full text available at www.uneval.org.

[3] These are the 27 Secretariat programmes, not including the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

[4] The 23 reports were provided by UN-Habitat, UNON, UNEP, the Department of Public Information, OHCHR, UNHCR, ESCAP, UNRWA, UNCTAD and OIOS. OIOS included all 5 of the reports it produced during the biennium. It requested other programmes to provide the 2 most recent reports produced during the biennium.

discretionary external evaluations; eight discretionary self-evaluations and one annual evaluation report (see definitions in para. 5). The meta-evaluation used a structured document review instrument based on quality indicators derived from article 7 of PPBME, the norms and standards recommended by the professional group of United Nations system evaluators — the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation principles.[5] There are limitations to the meta-evaluation due to its small and non-random sample.

III. Overview of evaluation practice in the Secretariat

5. In the previous biennial report, entitled "Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives" (A/59/79), OIOS had found that programmes did not consistently use the same nomenclature when classifying evaluations. OIOS had proposed actions to clarify evaluation terminology, which were noted and welcomed by the CPC.[6] In addition to publishing in 2004 a Glossary of evaluation terms, in June 2005 OIOS published an online manual "Managing for results: A guide to using evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat", which defined four types of evaluation. They are:

(a) Mandatory external evaluations, which are requested by the General Assembly, CPC and donors, conducted by OIOS, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and external consultants, and used by the CPC, General Assembly, and other intergovernmental bodies;

(b) Discretionary external evaluations, which are requested by senior managers, conducted by OIOS, JIU or external consultants, and used by donors, external stakeholders and senior managers;

(c) Discretionary self-evaluations, which are requested by senior managers and subprogramme managers, conducted by staff internal to the departments, and used by senior managers and their staff;

(d) Mandatory self-assessments, which are conducted by managers in the context of reporting results of the subprogramme's performance in the results-based format that are reflected in the biennial programme performance report.

A. Evaluation activity during the 2004-2005 biennium

6. **In 2004-2005, a total of 214 evaluations were reported to have been conducted.** That figure does not include the mandatory self-assessments that programme managers are required to conduct in the context of reporting of accomplishments in the programme performance report.[7] The total number of evaluations reported during the previous biennium was 134, and the number reported a decade ago (1996-1997) was 163.[8] As the programmes responding to

[5] Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Full text available at www.oecd.org.

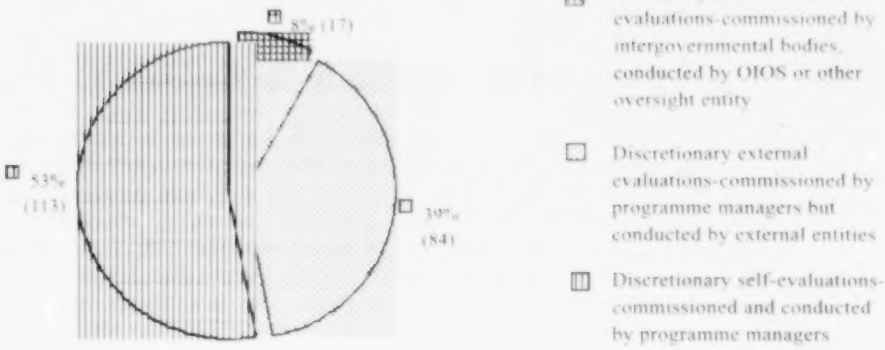
[6] See A/59/79, paras. 10 and 37, and A/59/16, para. 378.

[7] For 2004-2005, this involved performance reporting on 641 expected accomplishments, gauged by 974 indicators of achievement in 28 sections of the programme budget.

[8] See A/59/79, para. 9, and A/53/90, table 2.

those surveys were not identical, it is not possible to discern the trend in evaluation activity from the information. The chart below summarizes the type and number of evaluations conducted in 2004-2005 (excluding mandatory self-assessments).

Type of evaluations conducted in 2004-2005


8% (17)
53% (113)
39% (84)
Mandatory external evaluations-commissioned by intergovernmental bodies, conducted by OIOS or other oversight entity
Discretionary external evaluations-commissioned by programme managers but conducted by external entities
Discretionary self-evaluations-commissioned and conducted by programme managers

7. There remains inconsistency in interpretation of evaluation activity in the Secretariat. This is the first time that OIOS collected data using the classification of "mandatory" and "discretionary" for different types of evaluation which, as noted above, was introduced in the online manual "Managing for results: A guide to using evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat" in June 2005. While the Intranet site hosting the manual recorded 2,860 hits between the period June 2005 and March 2006, its impact is still limited as responses to the survey conducted in November 2005 revealed that more than half of the evaluation focal points were unfamiliar with the terminology.[9] OIOS noted that inconsistencies in the interpretation of what constitutes evaluation activity and in the reporting of evaluations continue to hamper the collection, accuracy and analysis of data on evaluation activity. Therefore, the data collected on types of evaluation must be interpreted with some caution and OIOS considers it crucial that concerted efforts be made to familiarize staff with the terminology in order to ensure the consistent use of evaluation terms throughout the Secretariat and the availability of more precise information on the types of evaluation in the future.

[9] Only 10 of the 24 respondents indicated that they had used the manual. Lack of familiarity with the terminology was also evident by the fact that 11 of the 21 focal points responded that no "mandatory self-assessments" were being undertaken when these assessments are compulsory in terms of reporting on accomplishments and have been submitted for inclusion for the 2004-2005 biennial programme performance report.

B. Planned evaluation activity for 2006-2007

8. **In the biennium 2006-2007, 262 evaluations of Secretariat activities are planned. However, the plans include activities other than evaluation and the implementation of the plans is at risk.** Specific instructions and an evaluation plan template were included into the programme budget instructions for 2006-2007. A total of 23 programmes provided evaluation plans for 2006-2007, with the programme managers planning for 239 discretionary self-evaluations and 13 discretionary external evaluations. In addition, there are 10 mandatory external evaluations planned for the biennium. OIOS notes that 109, or almost half, of the planned discretionary evaluations are to be undertaken by the five regional commissions, and commends their management for their intent to use evaluation as a management tool to support internal accountability and learning. Over and above this, it is also expected that programme managers will continue to undertake mandatory self-assessments required for reporting results for 2006-2007 in the programme performance report.

9. However, owing to the diverse nature of the activities being labelled as "evaluation" in programmes of the Secretariat, and the difficulty in identifying precise resource requirements for those departments and offices that did not have discrete monitoring and evaluation functions, the translation of those plans into concrete actions is not assured. These concerns were flagged by the Secretary-General in his proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/269.[10] As noted by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), "resources for monitoring and evaluation that have been included in the budget sections represent in most cases very approximate and very notional requirements" and the "information provided does not appear to meet the expectations of the Assembly, since there is little or no description of how the evaluation and monitoring functions are being carried out". The Advisory Committee noted further that "future budget submissions should also include information on the effectiveness of the Organization's investments in monitoring and evaluation".[11] OIOS findings on the lack of precision with regard to resources allocated for evaluation and the unclear nature of the type of evaluations to be carried out in 2006-2007 corroborate these observations.

C. Assessment of the quality of evaluation reports

10. The meta-evaluation conducted by an external consultant used five indicators to assess the quality of the sample of 23 evaluation reports consisting of programme-level self-evaluations and central-level external evaluations. These were: (1) soundness of methodology; (2) clarity of contextual framework; (3) strength of analysis, findings, conclusions and lessons learned; (4) strength of recommendations; and (5) usability/potential impact. The final rating for the quality of each report was based on these five ratings and the qualitative assessments made by the consultant. The small size of the sample and its non-random nature are limitations of the meta-evaluation, and therefore the findings cannot be projected to the universe of all evaluation reports produced by programmes in the Secretariat.

[10] Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007, Foreword and introduction, A/60/6, paras. 48-49.

[11] First report of the Advisory Committee on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (A/60/7), para. 26.

11. **Overall, more than half the sample reports received "very high" or "high" quality ratings.** On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest rating), the sample of 23 reports received an average quality rating of 3.8 (see below).

Quality of evaluation reports

Overall rating	*Number of reports*
5=Very high	6
4=High	9
3=Average	5
2=Low	3
1=Very low	0

12. **"Clarity of contextual framework" and "strength of evaluation recommendations" were rated as high in the majority of reports and were the main factors in the 3.8 overall rating for the sample.** A sound descriptive context provides a good foundation for strong critical thinking that is important in terms of the subsequent analysis of programme effectiveness. Clear, relevant recommendations are also vital if follow-up action is to be taken to adjust and improve programme activities. Out of 23 reports, 16 provided a full description of the programme context and addressed the relevance of programme activities in relation to objectives; 17 included a significant amount of information on obstacles that hindered the achievement of objectives and most sample reports were found to contain thoughtful, well-articulated findings. The majority of evaluations also established a logical link between evaluation objectives and programme objectives and 14 out of 23 evaluation reports included recommendations that flowed logically from findings and conclusions.

13. **However, many reports did not receive high ratings for "soundness of methodology", which raises questions about methodological rigour.** A sound methodology ensures the integrity and credibility of an evaluation's evidence, analysis and conclusions. Over half of the evaluation reports reviewed (13 out of 23) received only "average" scores for this indicator. Furthermore, less than half of the sample (9 reports) did a good job of supporting analytical findings with strong evidence. Many reports contained relatively few explanations of specific evidence derived from data sources. For example, analytical arguments and findings based on surveys often did not include information on the percentage of respondents, and, few, if any, details were provided on sample size or sampling methodology. Some reports included lists of interviewees in their annexes, but no information on what percentage of the possible universe these interviewees comprised. Methodological rigour was further assessed by reviewing the degree to which information provided in reports was presented in a manner that allowed the reader to differentiate between objective evidence and professional judgements on the part of the evaluator. Of the 23 reports, 17 were rated only "average" in that regard and only 6 of the 23 reports discussed limitations in the methodology used.

14. **The "usability/potential impact" of three quarters of the sample evaluation reports received an "average" rating.** In order to have impact, evaluation reports need to provide users with coherent, easily accessible and

convincing arguments. According to the UNEG standards, the final evaluation report should be logically structured, containing evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations, and should be free of information that is not relevant to the overall analysis.[12] The determination in 11 out of 23 reports was that a coherent story was only "somewhat" identifiable by the reader. Of the 23 evaluation reports, 6 did not include an executive summary, and in those reports that did contain summaries, it appeared that they were not always adequately developed. Some were too short to cover the contents of the main report in any meaningful manner while others seemed to reflect an alternative story. A wide array of formats also weakened the identity and comparability of evaluation reports. While variety is inevitable given the complexity of the United Nations environment, too much variation in formats can be disorienting.

IV. Assessment of current evaluation capacity in the Secretariat

A. Capacity for internal programme self-evaluation

15. **The lack of clarity in the definition of evaluation responsibilities and the low number of entities dedicated to evaluation within the Secretariat, compromises the overall effectiveness of self-evaluation at the programme level.** In 14 out of 24 programmes, there is a dedicated team or unit that has overall responsibility for self-evaluation. Only 5 of those entities have evaluation as their sole responsibility. The other 9 have added responsibilities for programme planning, research, coordination, monitoring and servicing activities. The remaining 10 programmes that do not have dedicated evaluation entities have a variety of arrangements that range from decentralizing evaluation responsibility to programme managers to undertaking evaluations on an ad hoc basis. OIOS further noted that while the regular conduct of self-evaluation and other monitoring and review activities by programme managers and staff is key to greater effectiveness and should be encouraged, the use of the term "evaluation" to cover a wide variety of reviews and related activities weakens the evaluation function itself. Objective, evidence-based evaluation is critical for fostering accountability and learning among Secretariat programmes. OIOS concluded that criteria that draw on the norms and standards developed by UNEG are needed to assess specific evaluation needs and capacity requirements at the programme level and to rationalize the existing arrangements. An evaluation needs assessment exercise would be of value in that connection (see para. 29).

16. **Limited numbers of evaluation staff and the lack of senior level staff dedicated to evaluation indicate low priority of evaluation at the Secretariat.** Data provided by 18 programmes showed that 26 staff members are assigned to work full-time on programme evaluation. OIOS also noted that there are no Director-level staff assigned on a full-time basis in charge of programme evaluation anywhere in the Secretariat, indicating low-level of priority accorded to that function. Respondents were also asked to indicate part-time staff time that had been allocated to programme evaluation and it was reported that a total of 6.3 full-time

[12] UNEG standard 3.16 on reporting, Standards for evaluation in the United Nations system, 29 April 2005.

staff equivalence were assigned to programme evaluation at the Director level and a total of 22.8 full-time staff equivalence at the Professional level during 2004-2005.

17. **The identification of precise and credible resource allocations for programme level self-evaluation proved to be problematic.** No specific guidelines currently exist on how programme evaluation costs should be assessed and budgeted. That has resulted in the inconsistent and varied manner in which 18 programmes provided information on the resources used for evaluation in 2004-2005. Some provided financial data, others work-month or work-hours statistics. Data varied dramatically — for example, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported sums up to US$ 2.1 million (from extrabudgetary resources) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia reported US$ 8,400.00 (from regular budget resources). Nine programmes reported zero allocations for evaluation. Those disparities shed further light on why there were difficulties in obtaining credible evaluation resource data for 2006-2007 (as noted in para. 9 above). Unlike many entities of the United Nations system, which routinely require specific allocations on a separate budget line for programme evaluation, there are no discrete resource allocations or outputs devoted to evaluation within the Secretariat programme budgets.

18. Over the years, there have been several reviews of options for strengthening programme self-evaluation and attempts to establish broad guidelines in terms of resources required for the evaluation function.[13] Most recently the JIU revisited the issue and has proposed minimum standards for budget and staffing. JIU suggested that in those organizations that manage biennial resources of at least US$ 250 million, an internal oversight unit can be justified, staffed with auditors, evaluators and investigators.[14] While OIOS would welcome a more consistent rationale for allocating resources for programme self-evaluation, it noted that the capacity required to evaluate should not be calculated solely on the basis of the total resources of the Organization. Other dimensions, such as the average amount of funding per intervention, the subjects of evaluation, the availability of data, the complexity of partnerships, and levels of co-financing, for example, should also be taken into account. OIOS also noted that a clear distinction should be made between allocations for audit coverage and evaluation activities, as well as between central external evaluation and programme-level self-evaluation activities.

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[13] See "Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations evaluation units and system and timetable for review of evaluation programmes" requested by the General Assembly in resolutions 36/228 B and 37/234, section II (A/38/133/Corr.1 of 6 May 1983); "Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations evaluation units and systems" (A/C.5/39/45/Corr.1 of 19 December 1984); "Status of internal evaluation in the organizations of the United Nations system" (A/41/201 (JIU/REP/85/10), October 1985). In the latter report, JIU discussed initial system design proposals for evaluation that were based on ratios of staff and resources: in this scenario 1 Professional-level central evaluation staff was available for every 1,310 Professional staff and for each $735 million in biennial expenditures. That situation was considered less than optimal and the JIU noted that UNDP had more favourable ratios of 1:174 staff and 1:$200 million, respectively.
See also "Programme evaluation in the United Nations: assessment of evaluation activities and proposals for strengthening the role of evaluation" (A/47/116, 3 April 1992), "Accountability and oversight in the United Nations Secretariat" (A/48/420 (JIU/REP/93/5), September 1993).

[14] Information obtained during discussion in January 2006 with JIU on the draft JIU report on oversight lacunae.

19. The UNEG norm on "responsibility for evaluation" specifies that governing bodies and/or heads of organizations are accountable for fostering an enabling environment for evaluation and ensuring that adequate resources are allocated for effective operation of the evaluation function. That norm is further supported by resolution 58/269 in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General "to ensure that resources are clearly identified in all sections of the proposed programme budget for the performance of the monitoring and evaluation functions". OIOS concluded that while resolution 58/269 provided a useful first step, further precision is required for determining the optimal level of programme-level staff and financial resources dedicated to programme evaluation in the Secretariat. Given the difficulties encountered in obtaining precise information for evaluation plans noted in paragraph 8 above, future guidance on assessing requirements for evaluation should be clear in distinguishing between staff and costs required for evaluation and those required for other oversight activities (such as audit and investigations) and for programme performance and monitoring functions. Subject to the findings of the ongoing independent external evaluation of auditing, oversight and governance and the completion of the needs assessment exercise (see para. 29 below), OIOS will make proposals for such guidance.

20. **Article VII of the PPBME lacks precision on how programme self-evaluations are to be managed and budgeted.** PPBME regulations 7.1 to 7.4 provide the common framework which specifies the function of evaluation as part of the cycle of planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. Respondents to the OIOS survey were asked to rate current guidance on how evaluations are managed and budgeted, and over half of the 21 respondents indicated that the PPBME rated between "fair" and "very poor". Consequently, 12 of the 21 respondents also indicated that the PPBME sections on evaluation should be revised, while 9 said they should not. OIOS concluded that while article VII on evaluation in the PPBME remains valid, clarification of specific regulations with regard to the following components would enhance the functioning of the evaluation system overall:

- Coverage and periodicity of external evaluation and self-evaluation
- Preparation and review of external evaluation and self-evaluation plans
- Review and use of evaluation findings
- Guidance on budgeting of evaluations
- Guidance on the management and conduct of evaluations
- Updating of evaluation terminology
- Guidance on systems to be set up for assuring quality standards, methodology and the adaptation and transfer of evaluation information and ad hoc studies.

21. It is desirable to clarify and update this guidance by late 2006/early 2007 so that it can be of use to programme managers as they formulate their budgets for the 2008-2009 biennium (see para. 30 below). In that connection, the UNEG norms on "evaluation policy" may provide a useful reference. The norms could also provide a framework for the assessment and validation of evaluation policies that have been developed in five programmes, namely the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

22. **Policies and systems to encourage the dissemination and use of evaluation findings need to be clarified and strengthened.** To explore the existing arrangements within Secretariat programmes in terms of sharing evaluation findings for the purpose of disseminating instructive practices and promoting organizational learning, as well as promoting mutual accountability, respondents were asked whether their programmes had a repository of evaluation studies available on the Internet/Intranet. Of the 23 respondents, 14 indicated that evaluation reports were not available on the Internet while 9 indicated that they were. Five programmes responded that they produced annual reports on evaluation. Only six programmes indicated that they had an explicit dissemination policy or guidelines. While noting that self-evaluations are not normally reported at the intergovernmental level and that, in some cases, programme managers may at their discretion wish to consider self-evaluation findings internally, OIOS intends to include an assessment of knowledge-sharing needs and systems as a component of the evaluation needs assessment exercise (see para. 29) so that a more systematic and strategic approach can be adopted with regard to dissemination and use of the different types of evaluation findings and lessons.

B. Capacity of the OIOS central evaluation function

23. **The OIOS central evaluation capacity is inadequate and unable to fully meet its mandate.** The OIOS mandate for evaluation is contained in General Assembly resolution 48/218 B, paragraph (c) (iii), which specifies that evaluations should be conducted "with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates". That mandate is further detailed in regulation 7.1 of the PPBME.[15]

24. With its current capacity of three Professional staff and limited consultancy support, the Evaluation Section in OIOS is able to produce one in-depth evaluation, one thematic report and two triennial reviews per year, as well as the biennial report on strengthening evaluations and an occasional ad hoc evaluation. The current staffing level for evaluation can, at best, ensure the conduct of in-depth evaluation of each Secretariat programme once every 27 years. OIOS considers that that is inadequate as a comprehensive evaluation programme to provide Member States with timely and independent assessments for their review of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of Secretariat programmes. That inadequacy has also been identified in proposal 18 of the Secretary-General's report "Investing in the United Nations" (A/60/692), as well as in the report of the Secretary-General on "Mandating and delivering: analysis and recommendations to facilitate the review of mandates" (A/60/733); where it is noted that "[d]espite several resolutions in which

[15] The objective of evaluation is: (a) to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives; (b) to enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives. PPBME rules 107.2 and 107.3 provide further details on the Evaluation Section's responsibility for providing methodological support on the preparation of self-evaluation reports by programme managers and for ensuring quality standards, the adaptation and transfer of evaluation information and ad hoc studies.

the General Assembly requested evaluation, the effectiveness of such tools has been severely limited by lack of resources", and that "[t]his has resulted in evaluations of limited scope and depth, and too few of them".

25. In addition, with the bulk of the available resources devoted to conducting the mandated external evaluations, the OIOS Evaluation Section has no resources to devote to ensuring quality standards, adapting and transferring evaluation information or providing methodological support on self-evaluation as mandated by rule 107.2 (ii) of the PPBME.

26. Pending the findings of the Summit Outcome mandated independent external evaluation of the auditing, oversight and governance system of the United Nations, and as follow-up to the proposals contained in its report (A/60/73), on the strengthening and monitoring of programme performance and evaluation, OIOS presents the examples set out below for strengthening the current central evaluation programme. They would provide a more rigorous and regular external evaluation of performance and outcomes of the Secretariat (excluding those activities covered by the peacekeeping support account).

1. **More regular, external evaluations of short duration at the programme/subprogramme level.** With the support of short-term consultants, it would be possible to conduct more targeted external evaluations of short duration covering all 27 Secretariat programmes over a two-year period, i.e., an annual programme of 13-14 external evaluations, with each external evaluation covering a sample of the activities for each programme. An annual synthesis report of the external evaluations can be provided to Member States as an objective source of evaluative evidence to complement information available in other programme progress, assessment and self-evaluation reports when they review strategic frameworks and examine the proposed budgets for programmes of the Secretariat.

2. **Increased frequency of in-depth evaluations and triennial reviews.** To ensure comprehensive in-depth evaluation of all programmes approximately once every nine years (instead of the current 27-year cycle), would require an increase from one to three in-depth evaluations and a corresponding increase to three triennial reviews each year.

27. Those benchmarks will be validated based on the forthcoming findings of the independent external evaluation of the auditing, oversight and governance system of the United Nations.

V. Actions to strengthen evaluation practice and capacity

28. OIOS intends to undertake the following actions to strengthen evaluation capacity and practice in the Secretariat.

Action 1

29. **A Secretariat-wide evaluation needs assessment exercise will be conducted to identify specific evaluation needs, functions, resources and capacity required at the programme and subprogramme levels.** As mentioned in paragraph 15, a comprehensive evaluation needs assessment exercise will be conducted by OIOS for all programmes of the Secretariat to establish their individual evaluation requirements. Such an assessment will use criteria derived from the UNEG norms and standards to measure the current situation and establish evaluation requirements

within each programme, which can then be taken into consideration as programmes prepare their budgets for the 2008-2009 biennium. It will involve specification of the budgetary provisions needed for evaluation staff and resources at the programme and subprogramme levels to address concerns raised in paragraphs 9 and 17. The needs assessment exercise will also promote the use of the new terminology developed for evaluation and the preparation of evaluation capacity-building plans for each programme to address the shortcomings in methodological rigour and usability of evaluation reports noted in paragraphs 13 and 14 above.

Action 2

30. **Current PPBME rules and regulations pertaining to evaluation will be translated into clear and practical guidelines.** As proposed in paragraph 20 and in consultation with Secretariat departments and programmes, OIOS will draft the guidelines for use by programmes.

31. OIOS plans to report on progress on the two actions and on the actions contained in the report on proposals on the strengthening and monitoring of programme performance and evaluation (A/60/73) in accordance with paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 60/257 on Programme Planning in the next biennial report, "Strengthening the role of and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives" to be prepared for consideration by CPC in 2008.

Action 3

32. The OIOS programme budget for 2008-2009 will reflect adequate requirements for rigorous and regular central evaluation of performance and outcomes of the Secretariat programmes and activities, drawing on the forthcoming findings of the Summit Outcome mandated independent external evaluation of the auditing, oversight and governance system of the United Nations.

VI. Topics for future evaluations

A. In-depth evaluations

33. **Completion of the in-depth evaluation of political affairs in 2007.** For the current CPC session, OIOS has presented the in-depth evaluation of subprogramme 1 of political affairs. For the next CPC session, to be held in 2007, OIOS will complete the in-depth evaluation of all remaining subprogrammes and activities of the political affairs programme. They will be presented in five separate evaluation reports:

1. Subprogramme 2 — Electoral assistance, implemented by the Electoral Assistance Division;

2. Subprogramme 3 — Security Council affairs, implemented by the Security Council Affairs Division;

3. Subprogrammes 4 and 5 — Decolonization and the question of Palestine, implemented by the Decolonization Unit and the Division for Palestinian Rights, respectively;

4. Special Political Missions — administered and supported by the Department of Political Affairs;

5. Overall assessment of the Department of Political Affairs, including a synthesis of findings from the subprogramme evaluations, and assessment of the remaining Executive Direction and Management, Policy Planning, and Executive Office components.

34 **Possible in-depth evaluation topics for 2008 and 2009.** Noted below is a list of programmes that have never been subject to in-depth evaluations. Using six criteria, namely, (1) size of budget, (2) organizational reach, (3) relevance, (4) duplication, (5) risk assessment and strategic importance and (6) coverage by other assessments (i.e., audits and inspections), OIOS has ranked the following discrete "topics" for selection by the CPC for 2008 and 2009. Items 9 and 10 have recently been subjected to inspections and may therefore be of lower priority for evaluation. Items 8, 11 and 12 are in the current workplan of the Internal Audit Division and there may be scope for those evaluations to be coordinated with the audits.

1. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

2. Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

3. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

4. United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

5. United Nations Offices — United Nations Office in Vienna, United Nations Office at Geneva and United Nations Office in Nairobi.

6. Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

7. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

8. Department of Management — Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM).

9. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

10. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

11. Department of Management — Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts (OPPBA).

12. Department of Management — Office of Central Support Services (OCSS).

35. **CPC may wish to recommend to the General Assembly for approval the evaluation of two programmes/subprogrammes from the above list for consideration in 2008 and 2009.**

B. Topics for thematic evaluations

36. To determine topics for future thematic evaluation, OIOS took into consideration the following factors: previous consultations with various United Nations stakeholders, breadth of coverage of Secretariat programmes, timeliness of the review, strategic importance, contribution to improving the functioning of the Secretariat and the significance of issues addressed. OIOS proposes the following four topics:

1. **United Nations coordinating bodies.** The objective of this evaluation would be to review the functioning and effectiveness of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the four Executive Committees established through United Nations reform in 1997, by assessing how conclusions and decisions reached by these bodies influence policy and programme development for the Secretariat. The evaluation would also examine more recent Secretariat inter-agency coordinating mechanisms.

2. **Gender mainstreaming.** The objective of this evaluation would be to determine the extent, nature and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations Secretariat. The evaluation would examine the policies, mechanisms and resources available to ensure the integration of a gender perspective into programme mandates, functions and activities.

3. **Lessons learned: protocols and practices.** The objective of this evaluation would be to identify and assess Secretariat systems and mechanisms for identifying, capturing and disseminating lessons learned. The evaluation would review the methodologies and protocols used, identify significant gaps and determine the extent to which lessons learned are fed back into programme operations to enhance performance.

4. **Coordination and collaboration between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the regional commissions.** This evaluation will assess the effectiveness and efficiency of coordination and collaboration between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the five regional commissions, particularly examining the systems, mechanisms and tools that are in place to facilitate their working together. The evaluation will also determine the extent to which roles, work programmes and activities are complementary or duplicative, and propose ways to strengthen the interaction between them.

37. **CPC may wish to recommend to the General Assembly for approval the thematic evaluation of one of the above topics for consideration in 2007 and one for 2008.**[16]

(*Signed*) Inga-Britt **Ahlenius**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Service

[16] OIOS notes that owing to the delayed meeting of the forty-sixth session of the CPC, and the subsequent delay in the selection of a thematic evaluation topic for presentation at the forty-seventh session of the CPC in 2007, it may be necessary to delay its presentation to 2008.